DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 786 FL 024 917

AUTHOR Brecht, Richard D.; Rivers, William P.
TITLE National Language Needs and Federal Support of National Language Capacity: The Critical Role of Title VI of the Higher Education Act.
PUB DATE 1997-10-01
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Needs; *Federal Aid; *Federal Government; Federal Legislation; Federal Programs; Financial Support; Higher Education; International Relations; Language Enrollment; *Language Role; *Public Agencies; Second Language Instruction; *Second Languages; *Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS Central Intelligence Agency; *Higher Education Act Title VI

ABSTRACT

The years since the fall of the Soviet Union have seen dramatic changes in international relations, global economics, global communications, population migration, and international organized crime. A survey of language needs in the federal government identified 43 countries of primary importance, 19 of secondary importance, and 30 languages critical to national security, all among the less commonly taught languages. All but three of those languages have low enrollments in the United States. A Central Intelligence Agency study identified shortfalls in the government agencies' study of Central, East, and South Asian languages. In addition, language needs are changing for the military, social services, and industry. Since 1958, the primary national vehicle for meeting long-term national needs in foreign languages has been Title VI of the Higher Education Act, which supports both the supply of language-competent individuals and the national capacity to maintain and increase that supply. The national capacity to supply expertise in the much-needed less commonly taught languages, all vital to economic, political, and military interests of the United States, rests largely in this legislation. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

David Maxwell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

National Language Needs and Federal Support of National Language Capacity: The Critical Role of Title VI of the Higher Education Act

Richard D. Brecht, William P. Rivers
The National Foreign Language Center

October 1, 1997

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 413 786

1.0 National Language Needs and the New World Order

The six years since the fall of the Soviet Union have seen dramatic changes in international relations, global economics, global communications, population migration, and international organized crime. The United States recently faced a world where one lingua franca served for vast stretches of the globe, where trade consisted primarily of durable goods, where law enforcement and environmental concerns were typically local or national in scope. All of these areas are now globalized; political, military, economic, and social needs for foreign language competence in the United Sates have changed with equal rapidity.[1]

Political Needs for Foreign Language: The 1997 National Security Education Program (NSEP) Annual Report details the results of a legislatively mandated survey of language needs in the US Government.[2] The NSEP annual surveys all federal agencies and offices with national security responsibilities to determine their language needs. The 1996-1997 *NSEP Critical Needs Assessment* identifies 43 countries of primary importance, 19 of secondary importance, and 30 languages critical to the national security. (See appendix A for a reprint of the *NSEP Critical Needs Assessment Summary*) All of the languages listed belong to the *Less Commonly Taught Languages* (LCTLs), i.e., languages other than French, German, and Spanish. Of the languages listed, all but Japanese, Mandarin, and Russian have enrollments in higher education of less than 1,000 students, according to the 1995 survey of foreign language enrollments by the Modern Language Association.[3] Some, such as Kazakh, enroll as few as five students; some, such as Kurdish, are not represented at all in the educational system of the U. S.

A second source of information on shortfalls in critical languages are the periodic needs assessments performed by the Director of Central Intelligence's Foreign Language Committee (DCI-FLC). The 1991 assessment identified shortfalls by agency; typical shortfalls included Central, East, and South Asian languages.[4]

---

[1] For a full overview of the effects of the changing world order, economic globalization, and international social issues on national foreign language needs, see: Brecht, R., and A. Walton. (In press.) "National Language Needs and Capacities: A Recommendation for Action." and Brecht, R., and W. Rivers (Forthcoming). *If a Tree Falls... America's Language Needs and Capacities: A Strategic Evaluation of Title VI of the HEA*

[2] The National Security Education Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-183, as amended) stipulates that each year the National Security Education Program "must identify those countries, languages, and fields of study that are important to U. S. national security."

[3] Modern Language Association of America. "Fall 1995 Registrations in Foreign Languages--Preliminary Findings." New York: Modern Language Association of America.

[4] Director of Central Intelligence Foreign Language Committee. 1991. Foreign Language Needs Assessment.

CL024917

Military Needs for Foreign language: In addition to the DCI-FLC reports, regular evidence of the effect on language needs of the changing role of the military in low-intensity conflict, peacekeeping, and nation-building operations appears in the mass media. For example, the recent joint-military activities in Ukraine and Central Asia[5] impose heavy burdens in terms of language requirements. These are compounded by shortfalls in critical languages in the military (DCI-FLC report, 1991)

Social Needs for Foreign Language: Social needs encompass health services, public assistance, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system. For example, a recent series of reports in the *Washington Post* detailed the difficulties faced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in fighting Russian organized crime.[6] Among the difficulties highlighted by the FBI was language - even though training in Russian has been a feature of U. S. Government language training efforts for fifty years. In another area of social needs, major telephone interpreting services, who are often contracted to perform interpreting for courts and health care agencies, now report shortfalls in several languages.

Economic Needs For Foreign Language: Two brief examples serve to illustrate economic needs for foreign languages. First, the private language services industry is now a $20-billion industry worldwide.[7] While this does not imply shortfalls in specific languages *per se*, it speaks to the growing economic value of language services. The second example we give here is the interest in Central Asian energy resources, a topic of much recent comment in the mass media.[8] The potentially explosive nature of the region's politics, the massive fossil fuel deposits, and the array of interested parties - the U.S., France, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and the Central Asian and Trans-Caucuses states, combine to create requirements for an unprecedented combination of languages and professional domains.

2.0 The Role of Title VI of the Higher Education Act in Meeting National Foreign Language Needs

From 1958, the primary national vehicle for meeting long-term national needs in foreign language has been Title VI of the HEA. Title VI support both the *supply* of individuals with foreign language competence, and the *national capacity* to maintain and increase that supply. Preliminary results of a recent assessment of the language component of Title VI show:[9]

---

[5] Smith, J. September 15, 1997. "U.S. Leads Peacekeeping Drill in Kazakstan." *The Washington Post.* A17

[6] Farah, D. September 29, 1997. "Russian Mob, Drug Cartel Joining Forces." *The Washington Post.* A1; *and* Farah, D. October 2, 1997. "FBI Chief: Russian Mafias Pose Growing Threat to U.S." *The Washington Post.* A18.

[7] Frievalds, J. 1996. "Consolidation in the Language Business." Multilingual Communications and Technology, 8(2): 28.

[8] Kinzer, S. September 14, 1997. "Azerbaijan has Reason to Swagger: Oil Deposits." *The New York Times.*; Kinzer, S. September 21, 1997. "A Perilous New Context for the Next Oil Prize." *The New York Times.*; Couturier, K. October 20, 1997. "Turkey Aims to Satisfy its Fuel Needs." *The Washington Post.* A17.

[9] Brecht and Walton (in press.)

- Title VI-supported institutions account for 22.5% of undergraduate and 59% of graduate enrollments in the LCTLs. Title VI schools constitute 2.7% of all colleges and universities offering language instruction in the U.S.
- Among the *Least* Commonly Taught Languages (those with less than 1,000 students nationwide), Title VI-supported institutions account for 51% of undergraduate and 81% of graduate enrollments.
- Title VI National Research Centers supplied 44% of the Ph.D.'s in the LCTLs from 1993-1995. This cadre of language experts forms the base of the research, development, and pedagogical expertise required to maintain the supply of individuals with competence in the LCTLs.
- A sampling of research published on Second Language Acquisition form 1992 to 1995 shows that the Title VI National Resource Centers produced half of the research published. In the *Least* Commonly Taught Languages, this proportion rises to 60% of published research.

The national capacity to supply expertise in the LCTLs, which include all of the languages listed as critical by the NSEP *Assessment*, and all of the languages of Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and East Asia, all of which are vital to the economic, political, and military interests of the U.S., rests in large part on Title VI of the HEA. Without Title VI, the nation's ability to maintain capacity in some 120 languages would be severely jeopardized.